

[Margie Rushing]

October 27, 1939

Margie Rushing (White Textile Worker)

Huntersville, N. C.

Mary P. Wilson, Writer

Dudley P. Crawford, Reviser Original Names Changed Names

Margie Rushing Mary Rankin

Joe Rushing Jim Rankin

Shorty Rushing Stubby Rankin

Lilly Lula C9 - 1/22/41- N.C.

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Little Jim age six, [answeree?] the answered my knock at the Rankin home and before we could exchange greetings placed his finger across his lips in a gesture of silence, and tip-toed in front of me into the living room. "Mother works at night and [?] is still sleeping," he explained. "Sometimes she sleeps till ten thirty if Lula, our housekeepers doesn't wake her with singing all them religious songs—just listen to that screeching, will you?" From somewhere in the back of the house came the high-pitched, shrill notes of "What a Beautiful Place Heaven Must Be."

"Dad's up yonder in the field sowing his crimson clover. He works at night too; but he don't sleep as late as mother does. I do wish Lula would hush;" Little Joe frowned and stamped his foot. "Oh gee, there I go making a lot of noise, and I hear mother turning over

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in there. Maybe you'd better go on in her room so she won't be giving me a scolding about the noise."

Mary Rankin looked young and beautiful as she lay there with her plump white arms framing her head of chestnut hair on the pillow. "That's all right about waking me up, I don't have to work to-night," she smiled, and stretched herself luxuriously, informing me that she would be glad to talk 2 about herself, and laughed heartily as she asked if there was ever a woman who wouldn't jump at a chance to talk about herself, especially if she'd ever had an operation.

"I was born and reared in the country, in a family of nine, which was not considered a large family in those days. My parents were simple hard-working people, but had the reputation of being "as honest as the day is long." There must have been some good blood in both my parents; I have thought about it lots in recent years since I have learned something about such things. My dad was a brick mason. He didn't make much money and could not give us the chance he wanted to, but I can see now that he tried hard. I can remember hearing him say what he wanted his children to do and how he hoped they would grow up to be healthy and have good characters. I shall never forget how it hurt him when the doctor told him I would have to quit school and go to bed for several years on account of having a mild case of T. B. He had planned for me to take training for a nurse. I stopped school when I was in the seventh grade. He died soon after that.

"Of courses I didn't think much about quitting school then, but I can see now what it might have meant to me to continues and my main interest in life now is to see that my children get a college education. I am not ashamed to work in a mill, but at the same time I would like for my 3 children to be prepared for something better. I don't see any reason why anybody with reasonable health cannot give their children educational advantages this day and time. Ny girl is twelve, she is almost through the grammar grades and will have a good high school right here at our door where she will be able to learn more in one year than I learned by the time I got married. That is, she will know something about a lot of things

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that are not in the books, and then she can take courses that will prepare her to do some particular job, such as, Home Economics, business courses, and such.

"I married when I was sixteen. I know now that was too young, but I still love my husband and wouldn't take a million dollars for my three children. I wanted a large family, but the doctors advised against it after little Jim came. I had to have two operations following his birth. Don't get uneasy, now, I'm not going to tell about them.

"No, we don't own our home yet, but we hope to some day. My husband and I both work in the mill, and he is trying to farm some on the side in order to make something extra. We make thirty five dollars a week in the Asbestos mill, but we will soon have to quit there, as it is suppose to injure our health after a few years—the dust, you know. My first work before I was married was in a hosiery mill. It was not as hard as this work I'm doing now, but 4 I make twice, as much as I did back then. However, I don't seem to ever have enough to do what I'd like for my children and to fix up the home. I have bought some right nice furniture on the installment plan and have it about paid for. I want to get a new stove as soon as I can. We are planning to move into a better house next year; this one is terrible when it rains. The owner won't even fix the roof.

"You know, it's right hard to decide what to spend your money for when you want so much. Of course, we've got to think about our diet first, and I am thankful to say that I understand what it means to have the proper food. I've seen so many people nearly dead with pellegra around these mills just because they cut down on their grocery bill in order to have money to run around and have a good time. Lots of them buy a new car almost every year and are not planning to ever own a home. We keep an old cheap car that is just barely able to carry us to the mill and back, but we'll have a nice home before we think about a fine / [c?]car.

"I started out once making up a budget, but soon gave it up. It seems I could never get it to come out right—always some thing something unexpected coming up. I had to spend

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about twenty dollars to get my children ready for school. That was much more than I would have put in the budget. No, we don't spend much for medicine, I'm thankful to say. Stubby and I both carry a small insurance 5 policy.

"Yes, I suppose the place we work is about an average; they pay just what they have to get the work done and no more. I am not one to say, but it does look like sometimes the owners have mighty little interest in their help. Then again I guess it's a big problem to handle a lot of help and run a big business. I hire only one person, and sometimes I get so worried about what they do and don't do I could scream. Lula is right good, but I can't stand her continual singing; sometimes beginning at five o'clock in the morning. My mother-in-law is coming to live with us this winter and I sure will be glad. She has been cooking out at the fair grounds for the past week.

"No, I can't say that I am entirely satisfied with this sort of life, but, after all, it's about as good as we could expect, since we are both uneducated. Stubby keeps talking about us giving it up and put in all our time farming, but I don't think that is the thing to do. He has put in a lot of time farming this year and I guess he will make about three bales of cotton, but that won't more than pay for the fertilizer. I guess farming would be all right if we had one of our own, but I don't see how it pays when you have to rent.

"Just to be fair with you, I hesitate to say anything about our ideas about church affairs. We both belong to the church and our children attend the Sunday School, but I'm not so terribly sold on what the church is doing. They do 6 a lot of good and we always make a contribution, but they don't pay enough attention to the poor people. I believe I could live just as clean a life without the church as with it, but there are lots of people who can't, and it is those people who need the church influence the most. It seems everybody wants to go to church nicely dressed and that makes the poor people ashamed to attend; they get the idea that they are not wanted. I sometimes think the churches ought to make everybody come to services dressed just alike then all would feel at home. No, I'm not sure

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the church is having much influence on morals, because you find a large portion of the church members are immoral.

"We don't spend much money on amusements, but I think it is fine to be able to go to a picture show, a ball game or a dance whenever you have time. I don't let my children go to all the shows because it is too expensive and then I think it gets to be a habit, to say nothing about what they might learn that's not good for them. I think there ought to be some way parents could know beforehand what a show is like and keep their [vchildren?] away from the bad ones. I have seen a few that I wouldn't want my children to see. If we ever get a nice home I want my children to have lots of amusement in the home. I would like for them to invite in all their friends and dance, play cards and have other forms of good clean pastime. You talk about amusements, I think one of the worst things [things?] these days is the way 7 young boys and girls do their courting. Most of them have automobiles and instead of calling on the girls at home they drive out into the country. I've heard the girls talk about parking on a side road in the dark. That's the reason I am so anxious for us to have a nice home. I am crazy about my girl, and I'd hate to think of her having to entertain her boy friend in an automobile parked on the roadside.

"No, Stubby and I don't take much interest in politics. He has voted a few times but I never have. He and I both feel like all this party stuff is silly, and that we ought to vote for the man and not for the party. The biggest trouble with most folks like us we don't know who we are voting for nor what he stands for; just have to go by what people tell us. From what I can understand our president is all right and is trying his best to do something for the poor class, but he's got a big job trying to do something for a lot of people who won't do anything for themselves." Margie Mary looked at the clock, bounced out of bed and began dressing. "Go look over the house while I dress and see what you think of my things. I want you to stay for dinner."

There were five rooms neatly furnished. The bare floors were almost white from frequent scrubbing. Shades and freshly laundered curtains hung at the windows, while the walls

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were decorated with large lithographs, and here and there framed photographs. In the kitchen Lula was placing a large pan of biscuits in a rickety stove, still humming a church song. Margie came in and ordered another place set.

"There's just one thing in my house I don't like. Just look at that oilcloth on the dining room table. That goes to prove a man is color-blind. Stubby bought that bright red checkered thing when I sent him to get a tablecloth. Lula says it's so red it stains the plates and napkins. Go take off your things and wash up; Stubby'll be here in a minute and we'll eat. "

Stubby soon arrived. He was a small man and looked like a boy as he stood beside his robust wife. Turning to me he said: "Well, did you get old lazybones out of bed? I tried to get her to help me sow the clover, but she just grunted and turned over for another nap. Guess she'll think of that next spring when I get my check from the government for sowing that clover." Mary, much to Stubby's embarrassment, placed her arms about him and said: "Don't you think I could love you a little and make you forget I didn't help?"

"Cut out your foolishness," Stubby said. "Let's eat."